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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1909.

SETTLE THE GAS QUESTIONS!

Does the House Committee on Affairs of the District of Columbia propose to allow a just measure, framed in the interest of the public welfare, to be overhauled by the one-sided testimony of men employed to protect a business that is yielding inordinate profits?

Does the House Committee on Affairs of the District of Columbia think it better to be guided by the ex parte advice of these well-paid water gas experts as to the gas supply of Washington, or by the unbiased recommendations of government experts, disinterested except as to the public welfare?

An official report, based upon a thorough chemical analysis and investigation, is in the hands of Congress—transmitted by the President—which shows that the product of the Washington Gaslight Company—80 per cent water gas and 20 per cent coal gas—contains 30 per cent of deadly carbon monoxide, and hence, constantly imperils the lives of consumers. Four known deaths are of record as the result of this poisonous gas supply. How many more actually have occurred from the same cause will never be known.

There is unanimous agreement, even by the high-priced water gas experts themselves, as to the dangers of carbon monoxide. Its deadly poison is not disputed. And nobody undertakes to combat the fact that the percentage of carbon monoxide in the Washington gas supply, accepting the findings of the government experts, is abnormally and perilously high.

But these experts, brought here to antagonize the change demanded by the government and the District, offer a volume of interesting technical testimony, enlightening only as to one side, hoping to convince the committee that, after all, coal gas is almost as dangerous as water gas, and that to compel a change at this time would work a hardship upon the Washington Gaslight Company in forcing the expenditure of \$7,000,000 for a coal gas plant, and thus render impossible a reduction in the price of gas to the consumer.

All of which, summed up and accepted at its face value, means this and nothing more—that the committee is asked to subordinate the interest of the public to the interest of the Washington Gaslight Company.

If coal gas contains only one-fifth the amount of carbon monoxide contained in water gas, and can be made to furnish an equally satisfactory light, which undoubtedly is the case, not only the wisdom, but the absolute necessity, of reducing the danger in that proportion becomes apparent at once. As for the outlay that would be involved in the change, we do not believe the Washington Gaslight Company itself would seriously contend that it would amount to even one-half of \$7,000,000.

Is it not a fact that the most modern, best equipped, and largest gas plant in this country, if not in the world—that at Astoria, N. Y., erected at a cost of \$30,000,000—is a coal gas plant? This in itself answers the assertions of these high-priced water gas experts that coal gas is becoming a thing of the past. Additional evidence of an equally convincing and irrefutable character in support of the District's demand for the substitution of a safer product for the poisonous gas now supplied may easily be furnished if the District is as active and alert in the public interest as the Washington Gaslight Company has been in seeking to justify its use of its dangerous product. Certainly, there should be prompt steps taken to put such evidence before the committee.

This whole gas question ought to be settled, and settled right, at this session of Congress. A safe illuminant is demanded at a reasonable rate. The stockholders of the Washington Gaslight Company themselves would subvert and conserve their interests by joining in the public demand for prompt and equitable action. A perpetuation of the present situation is impossible as to product, in view of the government's disclosures, and unjustifiable as to price, in view of the rate paid by consumers in other cities.

Incidentally, the bill regulating pressure, though relatively unimportant, should be passed in the interest of those sections of the city or suburbs that are justly complaining of poor service.

The Congressional Record is very carefully edited—by spells.

Passing of Civil Engineers of the Navy.

Of all those who are interested in the reforms in the Navy Department and navy yard reorganization begun by Secretary Newberry, no branch of the navy is destined to be more vitally concerned in the reformation than the members of the naval corps of civil engineers. They recognize that their importance as a staff corps of the United States navy has been materially lessened by the order issued recently placing the bureau of yards and docks, the head of which is a civil engineer with the rank of rear admiral, out of commission, and making

civil engineers, hitherto on duty in charge of public works at navy yards, subordinate to the naval constructors. If this does not limit the extension of the corps of civil engineers, nothing which can be designed by human ingenuity is capable of effecting that disaster. It is quite evident that the civil engineers of the navy are destined to find themselves a part of the corps of naval constructors, which would not be so much of a calamity since the naval constructors are able, progressive officers in whose intimate company any one should be glad to be found. But it must strike the civil engineers as something which approaches extinction when they find their independence of organization destroyed and their important functions placed under the supervision of another corps. They may be excused, under such circumstances, if they are found entertaining a grievance and contemplating a resistance to such a fate.

Stand up straight, Cuba, and be a man! Don't get wabby the very first jump from the box.

There Are Juries and Juries.

A contemporary wonders, in a degree bordering on amazement, that two of the jurors selected to try the Coopers down in Nashville for the murder of Senator Carmack are men who confess that they "never read the papers," and are "all but positively illiterate."

Without committing ourselves unreservedly to the proposition we shall forthwith set up, it occurs to us, nevertheless, that an argument might be advanced in this matter not altogether devoid of logic that is plausible if not ultimately conclusive. When we contemplate the outcome of the Thornton Jenkins Hains case, but recently under the public eye, and the more ancient but none the less discreditable Thaw case, not to mention others of parallel persuasion, we are moved to speculate considerably as to what might have happened had these cases been left to juries composed of men who "never read the papers" and were "all but illiterate." In the Hains and the Thaw cases the juries were theoretically composed of sane, upright, honorable men. There does not appear to have been a juror in the lot disqualified because of a disposition not to read the newspapers or for illiteracy. On the contrary, each juror was presumed to be something of an extremist on the other ways.

By something of a converse process of reasoning, we are led to suspect that a different outcome might have been recorded in these matters had the juries been long on common sense, as a primary proposition, and short on smartness and up-to-date wisdom secondarily. Some of the most level-headed men in this world in some respects have been woefully deficient in others. If the juries that do read newspapers and get themselves educated cannot do any better than the juries in the Hains and Thaw cases did, we are not sure but that it would be a good idea to turn the next case of the kind over to the ignoramuses. At all events, if we did not get an improved verdict, we should not be so keenly disappointed. You do not expect anything much from a dunce or an ignoramus.

A contemporary prints an editorial headed "The Arising South." The South shows a tendency not only to arise, but to shine.

Senatorial Approval of Sherman Act.

The Senate Judiciary Committee, in reporting adversely on the Warner bill for the amendment of the Sherman anti-trust law, has given that much discussed act a flattering endorsement. The act, says the report, is "clear, comprehensive, certain, and highly remedial." It is "in every respect a model law." To amend it, says the report, would be to do a calamity. On the other hand, to attempt to enforce this model law against all combinations, in the judgment of the Executive, "is worse than folly," as Mr. Roosevelt has pointed out in half a dozen messages. Mr. Taft also has expressed the view that the Sherman law should be amended, though his idea is that a very slight change will be necessary to make it a workable and effective statute. But it is evident that the mood of the Senate is at present opposed to any modification of this model law, and if that mood continues, those who believe it far too drastic will have no recourse but to hope for a less strict and literal judicial construction of it than has hitherto prevailed.

The issue involved in these diverse views of the Sherman act is whether combinations in restraint of trade or having a tendency toward industrial consolidation should be permitted, or whether they should be outlawed, no matter what their conduct may be and regardless of their industrial usefulness. The Senate committee's opinion that the law is a model one implies the opinion that it should be enforced, and a like implication arises out of the inquiry of a subcommittee of the same committee into President Roosevelt's refusal to object, on grounds of public policy, to the steel trust's acquisition of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company. But if that acquisition was in violation of law, thousands of similar acts are likewise in violation of the same law, and a government prosecution of all these alleged violations would clog the courts and set the industrial world by the ears. There is a serious practical question, as well as one of principle, in the Senate's attitude toward the law forbidding all combinations, as opposed to Mr. Roosevelt's belief that enforcement of it indiscriminately would be folly. It is whether the government can by any form or variety or number of legal proceedings, or by any sort of criminal prohibition, stop the whole course of industrial evolution, which is so emphatically one of combination and organization and mutual agreement. In spite of the committee's belief that the Sherman law is a highly remedial statute, there is little evidence that such application of it as has been made to industrial conditions has accomplished anything in reversing the universal tendency toward combination and organization of industry.

To the committee's assumption that the law is clear, comprehensive, and certain there may be interpolated the observation that its scope is by no means clearly defined by judicial construction. Up to a year ago it was by no means certain that

it could be invoked against the interstate boycott, and there are other phases of it yet to be passed upon by judicial authority. In fact, probably no other Federal statute of such importance is in greater need of judicial illumination.

Mr. "Beach" Hargis recently shot himself in the foot. While not all that might have been desired, "Beach's" acquaintances ought to let him know they appreciate that as a starter, anyway.

"The Chinese always begin their New Year by paying off their debts," says the Milwaukee Sentinel. The only sure recipe for doing this is carefully to avoid making debts during the old year.

The Charleston News and Courier is respectfully referred to the fact, moreover, that Mr. Taft admits having kissed the blarney stone in Ireland several years ago.

A New Jersey man insists on walking around on all fours. Doubtless, somebody recommended that to him as a sure cure for the grip.

We have not the slightest objection to the abolition of "Hon." by the Oklahoma legislature, nor yet would we demur strenuously should Kentucky do away with "Col." only we sincerely hope the growth of this idea in America will in no wise tend further to stimulate our hostesses in their foreign title-hunting.

"The sum total of Eve's words in the Garden of Eden was fifty-three," says the Bristol Herald-Courier. And the sum total of her sentence was twenty-three.

It is rather curious, when you come to think of it, that a winter so open as this one should be seized upon by so many Southern legislators as a fit and proper season to put the lid on things.

"Bold heads are an unnecessary evil," says a physician. Bold heads may be unnecessary, but they are not necessarily evil, we think.

It seems that the battle ship North Carolina got over the Charleston bar all right, and with Mr. Taft aboard, too. This, we presume, will forever silence the pestiferous ones who have made it their business to knock that bar for, lo! these many years.

Carrie Nation was pelted with eggs in London one night last week. As it appears the eggs were fresh, however, this may have been intended as a tribute of high regard.

Now, if benzene of soda can be used successfully to preserve our forests—why, that's another story, of course.

The simplified spelling board has had another relapse, so to speak.

"War with Japan is remote," says the Richmond News Leader. Would the war talk were equally so.

The New York Herald thinks the "lure" of Gotham is irresistible. Perhaps; but everybody seems to be pretty well on to the typical ill-prevaricator of New York.

"Binns doesn't look like a very kissable hero," says the Baltimore Sun. Which is lucky for Binns, if he has any desire to remain a hero.

The Louisville Courier-Journal calls on some one, indefinite and not named, to "squell" Thornton Jenkins Hains. Excellent idea! Incidentally, however, the squelcher probably has no disinclination to add another notch to his gun-handle.

A contemporary prints an editorial headed "The Arising South." The South shows a tendency not only to arise, but to shine.

Senator Joseph Bristow has set out for Washington with a war whoop. Says the Baltimore Star, Senator Davis could probably inform him there is nothing to it—if the Star's statement is really accurate.

In tendering Mr. Taft an alligator banquet, New Orleans is doubtless grimly determined to give him something truly strenuous to chew upon.

The Tribuna, published in Rome, Italy, proposes that Roman citizenship be conferred on Mr. Roosevelt when he first enters that city. We suspect the Tribuna was a little sure Mr. Roosevelt will do as Romans do when in Rome.

"I have been a kicker for twelve years," says John Wesley Gaines. To be sure; and a lusty one, too. Here's hoping Mr. Gaines is alive and kicking for many years to come.

"A Philadelphia man died of heart disease while waiting for a street car," says the Springfield Union. Which suggests the lines, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick."

That blizzard blizzed on schedule time, as the weather man said it would.

A Delaware man claims to have seen footprints of the devil, made in that State, according to his estimate, "within the last twenty years." Of course, some people will feel assured they are merely "Gas" Addeles' footprints, however.

Mr. Root, who succeeds Mr. Platt, says he favors a parcels post. One by one a few ancient strange holds are being loosened in this land of the free.

We are not at all sure it is true that hodcarriers smile more than millionaires. There are so many more hodcarriers in the world that it is hard to get the relative statistics straight.

Our Board of Aldermen.

From the Bottom Herald. The Congressional Record devotes several pages to a verbatim report of a debate in the Senate the other day on the question of appropriating a few hundred dollars for the removal of snow from the sidewalks, streets, and gutters of the city of Washington. The debate enlisted the finest talent of the Senate, and the question of providing the requisite funds wherewith to remove the snow that had fallen in a single storm was considered in all its varied phases, practical and philosophical. A personal of the numerous pages and columns of this debate serves as a reminder that the Senate of the United States is also entitled to rank as the board of aldermen of the District of Columbia.

Antiquities.

From the Bottom Transcript. Speaker Cannon's story, reported this morning, of the man awakened in the night by the feminine cry, "There are robbers in the house," only to reply, "You are mistaken, they are all in the Senate," is of about the same age and much to the same point as the joke now repeated in one of the local theaters that Congressmen have become so sensitive that in answering the roll call they now say, "No quillity."

No More Old Maids.

From the Baltimore Star. In this age there are no old maids. The term has been taken out of conversation and literature, but there are many bachelor girls, who do their part in the world with signal ability, and to whom the praises of the President-elect will be as welcome as they are justified.

A LITTLE NONSENSE.

THE PRESS HUMORIST.

He hitches Pegasus between the shafts of all the world's evils. Poor Peg must help himself demean. And do his daily bit.

The hapless steed must think it wrong. By daily back attack. To have to daily drag along. A literary hack.

His Position. "He declines the ambassadorship." "Why, he's a rich man." "Well, he wants to hold on to some of his money."

Just So. "The brook," babbled the poet, "runs on forever." "Does a continuous Marathon, as it were," commented the man in the street.

Sure Enough. "There's a fellow who is always borrowing trouble." "Why complain about that? He might be always borrowing money."

Front Row Toppers. Second childhood believes in faires. Bet your wage! That is why it always tarries. Near the stage.

Might Have Been Ancestors. "No matter how large it looms, one cannot always recognize Opportunity." "How, now?" "Some people, I believe, went back in the Mayflower."

Of Course. "Tis love that makes the world go round." "We really need is something to make the marriageable young men go round."

The Goods. "We live in exacting times." "As to how?" "The most deliver the goods and yet not be caught with them."

POOR SAINT VALENTINE.

Time Has Taken Liberties With His Once Revered Name.

Richard Le Gallienne, in the Delineator. The paradoxical, not to say absurd, antics of Time were never more quaintly exemplified than in this matter of St. Valentine. Never was insult more whimsically added to injury than by the arbitrary association of the stern and chastened saint who felt martyred beneath the clubs of the Emperor Claudius somewhere toward the end of the third century, with the joyous and essentially pagan festival which takes his name in vain. Recorded as "a man of exceptional chastity of character"—to be associated with Ophelia's beautiful, ribald, heart-breaking song:

And I laid at your window To be your Valentine.

and to be grossly libeled by Charles Lamb as "a rubicund priest of Hymen, attended by a thousand, and tens of thousands of little loves!"

The historical fact is that poor St. Valentine's reputation as a saint was sacrificed to that astute policy of the Christian church, which, finding the old pagan festivals too deeply rooted in the popular sentiment, changed their name to that of some Christian saint, and adopted them for its own.

Thus Valentine's day was originally a feast of February 14, and on the night before, boys would draw the names of girls in order to divine who should be their sweethearts in the coming year. The church frowned on this innocent game and substituted the names of saints for sweethearts—whereby, it may be supposed, the game would somewhat languish. Yet, in spite of the church, the old pagan manner of playing the game has gone on until this day; and country girls will still pin five bay-leaves to their dresses in order to divine who should be their sweethearts in the coming year.

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ROOSEVELT ON LINCOLN.

Tribute to the Martyred President's Humane Sentiments.

President Roosevelt, in the Review of Reviews. The deeds and words of the great men of the nation, and above all, the character of each of the foremost men of the nation, are one and all assets of inestimable value to the republic. Lincoln's work and Lincoln's words should be, and I think more and more are, part of those formative influences which tend to become living forces for good citizenship among our people. There is one of his letters which has always appealed to me particularly. It is the one running as follows:

Executive Mansion, Washington, Nov. 21, 1864.

To Mrs. Bixby, Boston, Mass. Dear Madam: I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the eldest general of Massachusetts that you are the mother of six sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief that is so nobly your own. I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully, LINCOLN.

Any man who has occupied the office of President realizes the incredible amount of administrative work with which the President has to deal, even in time of peace. He is of necessity a very busy man. A much driven man, from whose mind there can never be absent for many minutes at a time the consideration of some problem of importance, or of some matter of less importance which yet causes worry and strain. Under such circumstances, it is not easy for a President, even in time of peace, to turn from the affairs that are of moment to all the people and consider affairs that are of moment to but one person. While this is true of times of peace, it is, of course, infinitely more true of times of war. No President who has ever sat in the White House has borne the burden that Lincoln bore, or been under the ceaseless strain which he endured. It did not let up by day or by night. He had to consider problems of the widest importance, ever to run risks of the greatest magnitude; and ever through and across his plans to meet these great dangers and great responsibilities was shot the specter of an infinite number of small worries and small annoyances. He worked out his great task while unceasingly beset by the need of attending as best he could to a multitude of small tasks. It is a pity that in our country, where the truest of times of war, no President who has ever sat in the White House has borne the burden that Lincoln bore, or been under the ceaseless strain which he endured. It did not let up by day or by night. He had to consider problems of the widest importance, ever to run risks of the greatest magnitude; and ever through and across his plans to meet these great dangers and great responsibilities was shot the specter of an infinite number of small worries and small annoyances. 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